Charlatan: America's Most Dangerous Huckster, the Man Who Pursued Him and the Age of Flimflam, Pope Brock, Crown Publishers, New York, 2008, 324 pages.

The author of *Charlatan,* Pope Brock, is a free lance writer living in upstate New York and the author of one other book, *Indiana Gothic,* a family memoir. He has written for numerous publications, including *Rolling Stone, Esquire, GQ* and the *London Sunday Times Magazine. Charlatan* is the story of Dr. John R. Brinkley (1885-1942) who used his dubious medical credentials to amass a personal fortune implanting tissue taken from the testicles of goats into the scrotum of middle aged men seeking a rejuvenation of their sexual and personal drive. The operation which he developed was not without risks and not surprisingly numerous complications and deaths as well as law suits ensued. Exact numbers were unknown and why every patient did not suffer severe tissue reactions is never explained. A physician reading the book might well wonder if the operations were in fact sham procedures, something that would not have been beyond Brinkley to have practiced.

His life story is set against the background of medical practice and medical education in the United States from the second half of the 19th century through the first half of the 20th century. Dr. Brinkley's biography is told in tandem with that of Chicago's legendary physician and editor of the Journal of the American Medical Association, Dr. Morris Fishbein (1889-1976), whose legendary struggle to protect the public from quackery and exploitation in general and to end the ignominious and dangerous practices of Dr. Brinkley is fully detailed in an engaging in this book. The story reaches its climax with an account of the legal proceedings in a court room in Del Rio, Texas where Dr. Brinkley's misguided libel suit against Fishbein and the American Medical Association backfires as defense attorneys expose Brinkley as an avaricious incompetent charlatan. The book is factual and footnotes plus a useful bibliography document the author's careful investigation of his subject.

Why should such a book be of interest to readers of *Chicago Medicine?* In an era when almost every commercial break aired during primetime television programming features attractive advertisement for medications aimed at treating erectile dysfunction as well as direct drug company to consumer advertising for numerous maladies and prescription medications, Dr. Brinkley's exploitation of the then new media of public radio provides a cautionary tale. The Federal Radio Commission, forbearer to the Federal Communications Commission, as well as the AMA were powerless to restrict Brinkley's false and dangerous claims. Equally interesting is the history of glandular operations that proliferated during this era in both Europe and the United States after Charles Edouard Brown-Sequard in 1889, then in his seventies, presented sensational results to the *Société de Biologie* in Paris on the results of self injection of dog and guinea pig testicles. Chicago physicians such as surgeon, Dr. Max Thorek and University of Illinois Professor Frank G. Lydstron make their appearance in these pages. The life story of Morris Fishbein, his medical education, early AMA history, and the celebrities including Carl Sandburg, Upton Sinclair and H.L. Menken with whom he associated are given cameo appearances that further and make for fascinating reading as well.

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